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REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of this Patent Application, particularly in view of the above Amendment and the following remarks. No additional fee is required for this Amendment as the number of independent claims has not changed, and the total number of claims has not changed.

Telephone Interview Summary

Applicant thanks Examiner Mai for her time and comments made during a telephone interview with Applicant's undersigned attorney on 07 August 2003. The claim language and prior art rejections were discussed. The above Amendment is in response to comments made by Examiner Mai regarding the language of Claim 1. No agreement was reached during the interview.

Amendment to the Claims

Applicant has amended Claims 1 and 18 to clarify the claimed invention in response to Examiner Mai's comments made during the telephone interview. Support for this Amendment can be found in FIGS. 1-6 and at page 3, lines 9-20 of Applicant's Specification.

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Applicant has amended Claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 14, 15, 16, and 17 to further clarify the invention and/or provide proper antecedent bases for all limitations.

No new matter has been added to the claims by this Amendment.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 8 and 9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by Jang, U.S. Patent 5,794,640. Applicant has canceled Claims 8 and 9 and thus believes the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) is rendered moot.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-3, 5-10, and 12-22 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Gilberto, European Patent Publication EP 0 884 425 in view of Couse et al., U.S. Patent 2,882,564.

The Couse et al. Patent discloses hinges for structural units, whereby two panels are joined by a hinge 20 positioned in grooves 31 in the panel members. (Column 3, lines 3-7, for example). The panels can be held in various hinged positions by variously shaped binder members, such as a U-shaped binder member 44 having enlarged end portions which slide into an additional set of grooves in the side faces of the panels. (Column 3, lines 15-22).

The U-shaped binder member 44 of Couse et al. is alleged by the Examiner to be equivalent to Applicant's claimed C-sectioned fixing element. Applicant's C-sectioned fixing element has folded and inverted edges that each of which can be inserted into a corresponding groove in the larger face, not the side face, of two matched universal joints, thereby securing the matched universal joints together to form a composite structure of two coupled structures. In contrast, Couse et al. discloses a U-shaped binder member 44 which slides into two grooves in the side faces of the panels to hold the hinged panels open.

Applicant has amended independent Claims 1 and 18 as discussed above in view of comments made by Examiner Mai. Applicant respectfully urges that amended Claims 1 and 18 further clarify the claimed invention and the relationship of the C-sectioned fixing element and the corresponding grooves to the composite structure.

The Examiner alleges it would be obvious to one skilled in the art to modify the joints of the Gilberto Publication with the binder member 44 of the Couse et al. Patent to ensure tight coupling of the structures of the Gilberto Publication and to provide an aesthetic cover for the joints of the structures of the Gilberto Publication.

As stated in Applicant's prior Amendment, Applicant respectfully disagrees with the Examiner that one skilled in the art would add the U-shaped binder member 44 of the Couse et al. Patent to the structure of the Gilberto Publication to ensure a tight coupling. The joints of the structure of the Gilberto Publication are held together by a screw fixing means of the telescopic element 3 through the joints. The disclosed screw-based fixing means would ensure a tight coupling between the joints, and one skilled in the art would not be motivated to add an additional fixing means to the structure of the Gilberto Publication.

The Examiner also alleges that one skilled in the art would be motivated to combine the U-shaped binding member 44 of the Couse et al. Patent with the joints of the Gilberto Publication as an aesthetically pleasing cover for the coupled joints. The collapsible structures of the Gilberto Publication are designed to support platforms and floor boarding. (Column 1, lines 3-5). At page 2, lines 3-6, of Applicant's Substitute Specification, the disclosed folding structures are described as useful as product displays or supports for raised loads, such as platforms, walkway bases, technical pavements, etc.

When used as platform supports, such as scaffolding, the aesthetics of the structure are not likely to be important. When used as a product display, aesthetics are more likely to be important, however, Applicant's C-sectioned fixing element

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covers only a small portion of the matched joints and leaves the remaining structure uncovered. Also, Applicant describes at page 5, lines 10-14, one preferred embodiment where the C-sectioned fixing elements are only used on the external surfaces of the matched joints to provide sufficient stability, thereby leaving the other sides of the joints uncovered and in view through the structure. If aesthetics are important and one desires to cover aspects of the structure, such as in product displays or staging, one would hide/cover the structure using, for instance, drapery or other coverings. The U-shaped binding member 44 of the Couse et al. Patent would not provide sufficient cover of the structure of the Gilberto Publication such that one skilled in the art would find it obvious to combine these teachings for purposes of aesthetics.

Therefore, Applicant's claimed composite structure would not be obvious to one skilled in the art reading the cited references. Claims 1-3, 5-10, and 12-22 are thus patentable over the Gilberto Publication and the Couse et al. Patent, alone or in combination.

Conclusion

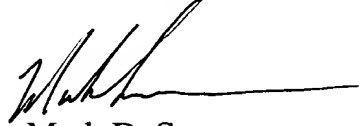
Applicant intends to be fully responsive to the outstanding Office Action. If the Examiner detects any issue which the Examiner believes Applicant has

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not addressed in this response, Applicant's undersigned attorney requests a telephone interview with the Examiner.

Applicant sincerely believes that this Patent Application is now in condition for allowance and, thus, respectfully requests early allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark D. Swanson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark D. Swanson
Regis. No. 48,498

Pauley Petersen & Erickson
2800 West Higgins Road
Suite 365
Hoffman Estates, Illinois 60195
(847) 490-1400
FAX (847) 490-1403